

Planter's Cabin  
7815 Highland Road  
Baton Rouge  
East Baton Rouge Parish  
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1135

HABS,  
LA,  
11-BATRO,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. LA-1135

## PLANTER'S CABIN

Location: 7815 Highland Road, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana.

Present Owner: Mrs. E. Leland Richardson.

Present Use: Storage.

Significance: This building, known locally as the "planter's cabin," is one of the few surviving examples of an indigenous type of Louisiana architecture in the Parish of East Baton Rouge. With cypress and bousillage construction, a front gallery, and four rooms with a central fireplace, the structure has been altered only slightly through the years.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: late 1700s early 1800s, indicated by the early nails, iron strap hinges, irregular saw works, roof construction, and bousillage (with the cypress joints being grooved into the uprights with no nails).
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The legal description of the property is "A certain tract or parcel of land together with all the buildings and improvements thereon containing 3.13 acres in Section 65, Township 8, South Range 1 East." The State Land Records indicate that Jacob and Joseph Sharp (Charp) were owners of said property as per the Spanish Land grants. The Act of Congress, March 3, 1819, confirmed the Sharps owning 246.10 acres. The earliest records that could be found begin:

May 31, 1819, Book G, Folio 539  
Will Roddey to William Denham, "A certain tract of land containing 200 arpents," \$500.

July 2, 1821, Book II, Folio 259,  
William Denham to John White, "A certain tract of land containing 200

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arpents.... with all the rights, titles, privileges, commodities and appurtenances thereunto belonging," \$1,000.

January 21, 1822, Book K, Folio 64  
John White to Anthony Trager, \$850.

January 5, 1848, Book A-1 Folio 283-4,  
William W. Traker to Clarissa E. Kleinpeter, wife of John L. Balsineur, "A certain tract of land.... on the Highlands at about 9 miles from the town of Baton Rouge, containing one hundred superficial acres.... together with all the buildings and improvements upon the same," \$1,000.

January 28, 1870, Book Y Folio 422  
Succession of Clarissa E. Balsineur, #988 by Thomas J. Bird, Sheriff, to William Hays, "12 acres of land on the Highland Road 6 miles from the City of Baton Rouge, with dwelling house, kitchen, cabins, corn crib, a fine orchard and all the necessary improvements thereon," \$700.

July 30, 1926, Book 175, Folio 429, No. 285 Probate  
Succession of William and Mary Thomas Hays to Katie Hays Grimes and Miranda Hays Howard, "The sole and only heirs of their deceased mother and father".

July 30, 1937 Book 348, Folio 75,  
Katie Hays Grimes and Miranda Hays Howard to M. Emanuel Hart, "A certain lot of parcel of ground situated on the Highland Road in the Parish of East Baton Rouge, at about 6 miles from the city of Baton Rouge, containing 12 superficial arpents having 3 arpents fronting on Bayou Fountain by 4 arpents in depth and being the same property acquired by William Hays," \$4,500.

May 27, 1939, Book 407, Folio 419,  
M.E. Hart to Robert Baskin Hawthorn, 6.9 acres as above, \$7,000.

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July 17, 1959, Book 1449, Folio 168,  
Robert Baskin Hawthorn to Edwin Leland  
Richardson, "A certain tract or parcel of  
land together with all buildings and  
improvements thereon containing 3.13 acres in  
Section 65, Township 8, South Range 1 East,"  
\$25,000.

3. Alterations and additions:

The Planter's cabin was moved back about 50 yards in the 1940s. As a result of the move, the kitchen addition was demolished, the cabin was raised on new brick piers, and the flooring of the front gallery, the cypress shingled roof and the double brick fireplace were replaced. A new house was built on the cabin's former site, and the cabin was used as a playhouse.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the  
Structure:

The Dutch Highlands were settled in the late 1780s, as indicated in the Spanish Land Records. The Sharp family was a prominent pioneer family. Later, the property was owned by a Kleinpeter daughter, who was also a member of one of the original settlers' families. Clarissa Kleinpeter was married to John L. Balsineur, who is listed in the 1850 Census as "Louis Balsinger," a fifty-six year old "Farmer" who owned \$1,000 worth of real estate. Clarissa was thirty-eight years old, and they had five children (2 girls, 3 boys), ranging in age from 8 months to 14 years. Two additional persons lived in their household, a 21 year old female whose occupation was not listed and a 22 year old male "Laborer."

The Balsineurs owned twelve acres of land, four of which were improved. The cash value was appraised at \$1,000 with \$200 worth of farm implements and machinery. The farm was listed as having \$500 worth of livestock, including five horses, five milk cows, fifteen other cattle and three swine. In 1849, the farm produced 75 bushels of Indian corn, 90 bushels of sweet potatoes, 20 pounds of butter, and a ton of hay (1850 Census, East Baton Rouge Parish, Population Schedule and Agriculture Census).

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C. Bibliography

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Conveyance Records, Spanish Records (translated),  
Parish of East Baton Rouge, Centroplex.

Interview with Jonathan Fricker, Architectural  
Historian, State Historic Preservation Office,  
July, 1978.

Interview with Vaughan Glasgow, Curator, Louisiana  
State Museum, July, 1978.

"Historic Baton Rouge," City-Parish Planning  
Commission, 1970, revised 1975.

2. Secondary and published sources:

1850 Census, East Baton Rouge Parish,  
Louisiana. Population Schedule, pg. 214, Household  
#927.

1850 Census, East Baton Rouge Parish,  
Louisiana. Agriculture Census, page 1.

Huguet, Florence Ballantine. The Dutch Highlands.  
Baton Rouge Bicentennial Commission, 1976.

Baldrige, Pat. "Old Louisiana Cottage of Mud  
and Cypress made into charming playhouse. Baton  
Rouge State Times, July 31, 1962.

"Many Faces and Moods," Baton Rouge Morning Advocate.  
July 14, 1974.

3. Likely sources not investigated: The Spanish Land  
Records, translated by the WPA, need more thorough  
investigation.

Prepared by Sibyl McCormac Groff  
Project Supervisor  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer, 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Planter's Cabin, an example of an indigenous Louisiana building type, features notched and pegged cypress framing, bousillage walls, and galleries with chamfered posts.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor. The flooring on the front gallery is rotting, and the bousillage walls are crumbling in some sections.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The cabin measures 35'-3" x 30'-5". With three bays, this U-shaped structure has one-and-a-half stories.
2. Foundations: The structure is raised on brick pers.
3. Wall Construction, finish, and color: The front construction is exposed, revealing fading whitewashed plaster and cypress. The gallery and trim are painted white. The other sides are clapboard, painted green.
4. Structural system: Cypress post and beam construction with bousillage, a moss and mud infill.
5. Porches: The west (front) gallery extends the length of the house and has six chamfered posts with a simple balustrade. There are no steps to the gallery, the floor of which is rotting. The porch is recessed under the main gable roof of the building. The rear porch is recessed between two corner rooms.
6. Chimneys: The brick chimney on the center of the ridge of the roof is a replacement.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The front gallery has two vertical plank doors, tongue-and-grooved and beaded. From the rear porch, three similar doors lead into the two back rooms and the parlor. Another door provides access to the loft.

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- b. Windows and shutters: All the windows have plank shutters. The north and south elevations have two openings on the ground floor with a smaller one in the gable ends. The west (front) elevation has the only window with nine-over-nine lights in a double-hung sash.

All of the openings have a small raised molding and simple square blocks in the upper corners.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The steeply pitched gable roof is covered with cypress shingles. All roof members are notched and pegged.
- b. Cornice: There is a simple flat fascia sloping outwards on the front and back elevations.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The two front doors enter into two rooms with a double brick fireplace between them. These two rooms are also connected by a door. Both front rooms have doors leading to the two smaller back rooms, which also have exterior doors on the rear recessed porch. The second floor is a sleeping or storage loft.
- 2. Stairways: The steeply graded, enclosed stairway leading from the back recessed porch to the loft is comprised of cypress members, slotted into the sides.
- 3. Flooring: Cypress boards measuring about 7 1/4 inches wide appear to be original.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls have whitewashed plaster over bousillage with exposed posts. The lath is grooved into the supports, with no nails. Between the two front rooms are two exposed diagonally crossed posts, which are notched. This is a most unusual feature. The ceilings are covered with beaded boards.
- 5. Special decorative features: Baseboards are extant in all rooms except the northeast one. In the northwest room is a chair rail and architrave trim around the window. Notched and pegged framing is visible above the fireplace in both front rooms.

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6. Hardware: All doors have early iron strap hinges.  
The front doors have spiral turned hooks.

D. Site and Surroundings:

The planter's cabin is located in the back part of the property behind some small trees. It faces west and looks out on its replacement. The majestic live oak

trees that surrounded the planter's cabin before it was moved still remain on the property.

Prepared by Sibyl McCormac Groff  
Project Supervisor  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer, 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was jointly sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the City of Baton Rouge, Parish of East Baton Rouge, Department of Public Works, Division of Community Development. Under the auspices of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth Anderson, Principal Architect, the project was completed in the summer of 1978 at the HABS field office, Department of Architecture, Louisiana State University. The team was comprised of Sibyl McCormac Groff (Columbia University), project supervisor/historian; Timothy Allanbrook (Rhode Island School of Design), project foreman; architect Kate Johns (Arizona State University); and student architects William J. Graham (University of Maryland), Robert D. Louton (University of Arkansas), and George W. Steinrock, Jr. (University of Detroit).



ADDENDUM TO  
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